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## The Effects of Kindergarten Redshirting from a Parental Perspective

# The Effects of Kindergarten Redshirting from a Parental Perspective

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction

by

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May 2014  
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This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Kindergarten redshirting is the term used to describe the phenomenon where a parent chooses to keep their child from attending kindergarten so that the child may gain a year's worth of maturity. This qualitative dissertation examines the decision making process undergone by parents who have redshirted their children. While some parents began the decision making process soon after their child's birth, every parent in the study considered the decision carefully. The study also provides an analysis of the outcomes the redshirting has provided for children as perceived by their parents. Parents rated the academic, social and emotional effects of kindergarten redshirting as highly positive for their child. The underlying theme that emerged from this study was the parental belief shared by parents who redshirted their child is that being older among peers provides more advantages for children in the early grades of elementary school as well as high school and college.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to Bryan, Haley and Alex Dougan.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Kindergarten redshirting is the phenomenon of keeping a child out of school for an additional year before kindergarten though the child is legally allowed to attend. The term is borrowed from college sports where freshman athletes are allowed an additional year to mature and address deficiencies in skill without giving up a year of eligibility to compete. Parents of redshirted children may be opting to keep their children out of kindergarten for an additional year in order for the child to gain maturity or academic skills.

Kindergarten redshirting (also referred to as academic redshirting) is not a new phenomenon. Though it was used in the 1970s, the practice gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s (Graue & DiPerna, 2000; Shepard & Smith, 1988; Yesil-Dagli, 2006). Redshirted children often have birthdays that fall just before the kindergarten cut-off date. Each state sets one date per year that delineates when a child is old enough to attend kindergarten. Redshirting is used most often by parents who are middle and upper-middle class who can afford to provide day care or stay home with the child for an additional year (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). Some researchers claim that the increase in number of older kindergarteners may have enabled teachers to instruct their pupils at higher levels of rigor, which could have been detrimental to the younger students (Graue & DiPerna, 2000; Shepard & Smith, 1988; Yesil-Dagli, 2006).

### **Context**

There are few studies that have been conducted on redshirted children. The studies most often cited used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 and found that older children scored higher in math and reading than younger children when they were in kindergarten (Datar, 2006; Lin, Freeman & Chu, 2009; Oshima & Domaleski, 2006;

Yesil-Dagli, 2006). Datar (2006) found that older children not only start out with higher test scores in kindergarten, but they also gain knowledge at higher rates in the first and second grades. Yesil-Dagli (2006) found similar effects for older children in kindergarten, first and second grades but that the effect diminished by third grade. Lin, Freeman and Chu (2009) found positive effects on test scores for older children up to fifth grade and Oshima and Domaleski (2006) found that older children scored higher in reading and mathematics in the eighth grade.

Because so few studies have been done on children who were purposely redshirted, much of the research has centered on relative age effects. The relative age of a child is how old or young the child is compared to the other children in the group to which they are being compared. Kindergarten cut-off dates arbitrarily assign the classification of “oldest” and “youngest” based solely on where the child’s birth date falls in relation to another child’s birth date. Studies have been conducted on the effects of relative age in sports and found that older children are more likely to be chosen for elite teams (Barnsley & Thompson, 1988; Helsen, Van Winckel & Williams, 2005). The researchers claim that these children are bigger and more developmentally advanced due to their age rather than naturally talented in the specific sport. The inclusion on elite teams provides them with better coaching and more time learning advanced playing skills. Some researchers have proposed that the same thing happens in the classroom. Older children are viewed as more mature and are more likely to be included in advanced academic groups (Coble, McKenna, Baker & Wattie, 2009). The higher expectations for these children produce higher achievement in school.

There may be other benefits to being among the older children in a cohort than simply achieving a higher test score. Older children are more likely than their younger peers to enroll in a four year college after high school (Bedard & Dhuey, 2006) and occupy leadership roles in

high school (Dhuey & Lipscomb, 2008). Younger children are also more likely to be retained or diagnosed with learning disabilities (Dhuey & Lipscomb, 2008; Martin, Foels, Clanton & Moon, 2004). Elder (2010) found that younger children are more often diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Retention is the practice by which a child repeats a grade in school due to the lack of achieving a minimum standard of academic skills for a particular grade. Repeating a grade would allow a relatively young child to become part of the oldest group; therefore, on the surface, retention seems similar to redshirting. However, research has shown that children who have been retained have low self-esteem and negative feelings about school (Carlton & Winsler, 1999). Any improvement in academic achievement is typically temporary and disappears when the child moves to the next grade (Jimerson, 2001).

School-entry is an important transition period for every child, and for most children, kindergarten is the beginning of formal education. Furlong and Quirk (2011) found that higher school readiness factors in kindergarten predicted high achievement in both reading and mathematics in later grades. However, research is showing that academic preparedness is not the only aspect of education that should concern policy-makers (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Graziano, Reavis, Keane & Calkins, 2007; Ladd, Herald & Kochel, 2006; Pagani & Allard, 2011; Raver, 2002). The transition to kindergarten requires a shift away from parents and caregivers toward a system that requires children to strive to perform to a standard. The ease of transition to the new set of demands can have many consequences for children. Graziano, Reavis, Keane, and Calkins (2007) found that children with better emotion regulation skills have an easier time adjusting to the academic and socio-emotional demands of kindergarten.

Alexander and Entwisle (1988) found that children with difficult transitions to kindergarten had lower academic achievement in subsequent grades.

Raver (2002) stated that “young children’s emotional adjustment matters. Children who are emotionally well-adjusted have a significantly greater chance of early school success while children who experience serious emotional difficulty face grave risks of early school difficulty” (p. 3). Kindergarten is not simply the first time a child is subject to academic pressures. Social pressures begin to affect children as well. Kindergarteners have to learn to deal with teachers and peers without the support of their parents or other caregivers. Ladd, Herald and Kochel (2006) found that children with more pro-social skills were more accepted by their peers and thus, had more resources with which to handle the transition to kindergarten. Pagani and Allard (2011) found that children with the inability to pay attention were viewed as less social by their peers. Forming and maintaining friendships and learning to self-regulate emotions can have long-lasting effects on a child’s academic achievement (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Graziano et al., 2007; Ladd, Herald & Kochel, 2006).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This qualitative study examined the decision-making process of parents who have redshirted their children and examined the outcomes based on that decision through the parent perspective. The study also found common factors that parents consider when determining if redshirting is the best option for their child. Knowledge generated from this study will be used to develop guidelines to help parents make the decision about when redshirting should be considered as an option for a child as well as inform educators about how they can help parents through this process. The knowledge gained through this study will help other parents navigate their way through the decision-making process.

This study also analyzed how parents perceived their decision to redshirt their children once the children have completed kindergarten and moved on to higher grade levels and determined common outcomes for children who were kindergarten redshirted. Both positive and negative outcomes common among the parents were examined. These factors will help other parents compare their situations to the ones experienced by the participants in the study so they can make a more informed decision.

### **Theoretical Base**

Parents are the primary decision-makers about whether or not a child is redshirted in kindergarten. While this study examined the decision-making process of parents as well as their perceived outcomes, there are some basic theories that parents may be working from as they work through the process. Two theories illustrate possible beliefs about child development when parents are discussing the issue of whether or not their child is ready for kindergarten. The maturationist theory originates from the work of Piaget and posits that children must achieve certain cognitive developmental milestones before they are able to learn (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). An opposing theory is that children are ready to learn as long as they are supplied with the right type of environment and the right tools for learning (Skinner, 1953). Parents use their personal experiences as well as what they understand about child development to make sense of what the kindergarten experience should be for their child. Parents who think that a child should be mature enough to handle not only the academic, but also the emotional demands of kindergarten are operating with a decision-making schema that makes redshirting a more viable option.

Another theory that could be driving the parent toward redshirting is that of relative age effects. Though many parents have limited knowledge of kindergarten standards, they are quite adept at comparing their child's physical and emotional characteristics to those children who

could be peers in school. Older children may be perceived as more mature and more ready for kindergarten than younger children. This comparison may be influencing the decision-making process.

Kindergarten redshirting is a mechanism that must be chosen by parents. If a child is legally allowed to attend school but the child can opt out of attending kindergarten, the parent maintains control of the child's educational activities for the redshirt year. Though educators may advise parents to wait a year, the decision rests solely with the parents.

### **Research Questions**

This study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the decision-making process that parents utilize when deciding if their child should be kindergarten redshirted or not?
- 2) What do parents perceive as the academic, emotional or social outcomes from kindergarten redshirting their children?
- 3) What common factors do parents consider when they are trying to decide about the option of kindergarten redshirting their child?

### **Research Design Overview**

This study was a phenomenological study based on the constructed perceptions of parents who made the decision to redshirt their child in kindergarten. The participants of the study were parents from the state of Arkansas who chose to redshirt their child. The requirements for parents to be included in the study follow: Parents must have made the conscious decision to kindergarten redshirt their child; and the child must not have been retained after the initial year of kindergarten. The data was collected through face-to-face and telephone interviews utilizing a semi-structured protocol. All parents were asked the same questions, but the participants were



allowed to talk about any aspect of redshirting they perceived important or interesting. The data analysis was completed using coding techniques and member checks to triangulate the data. The participants also had the chance to review the transcripts of their interviews.

### **Assumptions**

The assumption was made that participants in the study consciously and deliberately made the decision to redshirt their child based on the factors that they deemed most important to their child's success in school. It was also assumed that each parent had a different perspective of the phenomenon unique to them or to their child. Each person's experience is unique because each individual uses their own past experiences to develop meaning. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) state that "individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings" (p. 9). There was also an assumption that parents would be honest in their responses to the interview questions.

### **Delimitations**

There are many factors that limit the findings of this study. One of those delimitations is that all of the parents interviewed in the study will be from the same geographical region. The kindergarten cut-off dates are uniform across the state of Arkansas, so while this fact provides a way of comparing parental perspectives in this state, it is be difficult to apply the same findings to a state with a radically different cut-off date. Though three of the parents in the study lived outside of the state of Arkansas when their child attended kindergarten, such a small sample would not represent the perceptions of parents in those states. The close proximity of the parental locations of schools also provided a common educational environment across the region as well as common non-school environments such as local extra-curricular activities available to children.

## **Limitations**

The parents in this study freely volunteered to participate. These parents were confident about the decision they made for their child and willing to discuss their thinking in great detail. The perception of kindergarten redshirting of this sample of parents may be very different from parents who also redshirted their child, but regret their decision. The perception of positive and negative outcomes that redshirting has had on their child may differ dramatically based on how a parent perceives their decision. The findings of this study cannot be extrapolated to all parents who have redshirted their children, but only to parents having similar characteristics as the parents in this study.

## **Researcher**

At the time of this study, the researcher had completed all course requirements of a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The researcher had been a teacher and a curriculum expert in secondary mathematics for 15 years. The researcher also brought a personal experience to the kindergarten redshirting issue, having made the decision to redshirt her son approximately 8 years before this study was implemented.

## **Significance of the Study**

Every year, parents all over the United States struggle with the decision of kindergarten redshirting. With few available studies on the phenomenon, parents approach the decision with emotion and limited facts on the best course of action for their child. If they allow their child to start kindergarten when the child is legally allowed, the parent chooses for their child to be among the youngest in the grade. This trajectory can only be taken once. As research has shown, there are negative effects when children repeat a grade (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Jimerson, 2001), so the decision to redshirt or not can only be made before a child completes

kindergarten (Oshima & Domaleski, 2006). This study will inform parents and educators about how kindergarten redshirting affects the academic and socio-emotional outcomes for children. This knowledge can be used to help parents make better-informed decisions about whether or not they should redshirt their child and what aspects of their child's life may be affected. Teachers and principals could use the knowledge generated in this study to minimize relative age effects for students in their care and to advise parents who are struggling with this decision.

### **Definition of Terms**

Academic Redshirting - the act of delaying entrance to kindergarten for an additional year though the child is of legal age to enter school (also referred to as kindergarten redshirting).

Kindergarten Redshirting - the act of delaying entrance to kindergarten for an additional year though the child is of legal age to enter school (also referred to as academic redshirting).

Relative Age Effects – outcomes that are influenced by the age of a child compared to the other children within a particular group.

Retention – the act of repeating a grade in school due to a child failing to meet academic standards.

## **CHAPTER 2<sup>1</sup>**

### **Literature Review**

Kindergarten redshirting is the practice of starting a child in kindergarten a year later than the child could legally begin school. The term is borrowed from the college sports arena and refers to the year when freshmen athletes forgo competition in order to gain maturity and skill or to recover from an injury. Redshirting should not be confused with grade retention. Retention is the act of holding a child back from passing on to the next grade because he is lacking in the skills needed to be successful. Many people also use the phrase “failing a grade” when referring to retention.

Since there are very few studies that empirically measure the academic success rates of redshirted children, this integrative literature review includes studies that focused on relative age effects and other aspects of adjusting to kindergarten that may be important to parents. Relative age effects are the differing experiences and developmental rates that occur between the oldest and youngest children when they are grouped together for school or activity purposes. Redshirting plays a role in relative age effects when parents opt to keep their children out of school for a year. The redshirted children become the oldest rather than the youngest children in the kindergarten classroom.

### **Methodology**

The studies in this article were found by searching the EBSCO Academic Search Premier Database and Google using keywords “kindergarten redshirting,” “relative age effects,” and “grade retention.” The list was narrowed by choosing articles which had been published in peer-reviewed journals. In this literature review, quantitative studies provide the data to determine the relative academic success between older and younger students. Mixed method studies were

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is largely based on a previous article by Kelli L. Dougan and John C.

Pijanowski published in the International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation.

chosen that describe the academic success and emotional reactions of students who had been retained in the primary grades.

A study was also included in the history section of this chapter to provide a more complete picture of academic redshirting and the various reasons the phenomenon has gained in popularity in the United States. This study was not included in the actual analysis of the phenomenon of academic redshirting due to the fact that it was conducted using data more than two decades old and focused on a small geographic area. Those issues make the results hard to generalize to other parts of the United States. However, this oft-cited study provides a more comprehensive basis for many articles written about academic redshirting before 2004. Excluding it would provide an incomplete depiction of how this phenomenon is treated in the literature.

### **History of Redshirting**

Academic redshirting is not a new practice. It was used sparingly in the 1970's and grew in popularity in the 1980's (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). In that decade, many researchers cited the increase in older kindergarteners as one of the driving forces behind the increased academic demands of kindergarten. Classrooms with older children afforded teachers the opportunity to hold higher expectations for both behavior and learning skills. Classes with large groups of older children may have been taught at a higher academic level which could have been detrimental to the younger children in class (Graue & DiPerna, 2000; Shepard & Smith, 1988; Yesil-Dagli, 2006). In the 1990's, the prevalence of redshirting continued to grow (Graue & DiPerna, 2000).

Graue and DiPerna's (2000) research explored several different issues about redshirting. This study had a sample of over 8,000 students from the state of Wisconsin. The researchers found many areas of the state where a large percentage of parents were choosing to redshirt their

children. Parents are the primary decision makers about whether or not their children enter kindergarten on time. If parents are counseling other parents about delaying kindergarten entry, like-minded parents follow suit (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). This can create a de facto school policy in communities where a significant percentage of parents choose to redshirt their children merely because other parents are making the same decisions (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). In areas where more parents are redshirting their children, the older students in class may be affecting the kindergarten curriculum as teachers accommodate the more mature members of the classroom. The larger percentage of older children then drives up the standards of behavior and achievement in the kindergarten classroom (Graue & DiPerna, 2000).

Wisconsin used a September 1<sup>st</sup> cut-off date for kindergarten entry. The data clearly showed that children with birthdates just before the cut-off had a much higher chance of retention before third grade (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). However, there did not seem to be an advantage in redshirting. Test scores of redshirted children were very similar to children who started school on time. Interestingly, the test scores for children who had failed kindergarten or who had been retained in first or second grade were lower than all the other groups. Graue and Diperna's (2000) study also found that older children had a higher risk of being diagnosed with learning disabilities. Conversely, later studies have found that younger, not older children have a higher rate of learning disabilities (Dhuey & Lipscomb, 2008; Martin, Foels, Clanton & Moon, 2004).

The authors state that in their sample, districts range from 3 percent to 94 percent of students who have been redshirted. However, the authors explain that their 94 percent comes from only one community that had only one kindergarten class. This particular community had effectively changed the district cut-off date through the actions of parents. In Wisconsin

communities where large groups of parents who are redshirting just because other parents are redshirting, it is logical to say that some children probably would have not been redshirted if they had lived in communities in a different geographic area.

### **Studies on Redshirting**

Few studies have been conducted on redshirted children. From the studies that have examined the effects of academic redshirting, we learn that most redshirted children are Caucasian boys from middle or upper class families whose birthdays fall just before the cut-off date to begin kindergarten (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). Nationally, it is believed that approximately 4 percent of students are redshirted each year (Bassok & Reardon, 2013). With the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001, there has been a marked increase in the rigor and academic expectations of kindergarten (Miller & Almon, 2009). Though there is evidence that standards started changing in the early 1970's (Shepard & Smith, 1988), the race to get all children to read on grade level before the third grade has greatly increased what is demanded of kindergarteners in the United States.

Datar (2006) offers a comprehensive study of redshirted children using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999. An important component of this study is that the researcher calculated the age of the children by counting the number of days between the child's birthday and the school's cut-off date. This methodology allowed data from all over the country to be used since states do not all have the same kindergarten entrance cut-off date.

Datar's (2006) work showed that not only did children who started kindergarten a year later have higher test scores in kindergarten, their subsequent test scores in first and second grade rose at a steeper trajectory than the test scores of other students. The redshirted children started

out more advanced and made greater gains in academic performance. Another interesting finding of this study showed that poor children made even larger gains than children from higher socioeconomic status homes. “Results suggest that poor and disabled children and boys benefit significantly more from delaying kindergarten entrance, in terms of test score gains especially in reading” (Datar, 2006, p.58).

A second study that used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 was conducted by Oshima and Domaleski in 2006. Although the study concerned academic redshirting in a general sense, the researchers did not include any children who had actually been redshirted. The researchers in this study divided the children into groups who had summer birthdays (June, July and August) and those who had fall birthdays (September, October and November) and restricted the data to only those children for whom that year was their first in kindergarten. The summer group represented the youngest children while the fall group constituted the oldest group of children in the study. The researchers randomly selected 3,000 children from each group as their sample groups. There was a significant difference in math and science test scores between the two groups from kindergarten through fifth grade with the older students scoring higher. The gaps between the oldest and youngest students decrease over time, but did not completely disappear. In fact, the disparity was still present in eighth grade. The researchers found that age was a stronger predictor of reading and mathematics success than gender or race in the early grades.

Oshima and Domaleski’s (2006) study examined not only test scores, but also height of children and found that older kindergarteners were 1.95 inches taller than the younger kindergarteners. Such a considerable height difference would be easily seen in the classroom and shorter children may be viewed by the teacher as being less mature or less skilled in some



kindergarten domains (Oshima and Domaleski, 2006). Height of the child is an important factor to note because height has been found to determine a child's chance of retention (Wake, Coghlan, & Hesketh, 2000). Oshima and Domaleski (2006) point out that although their study was connected to academic redshirting theoretically, it was not designed to make a case for or against redshirting, but simply pointed out the data that show that older children achieve at higher academic levels than younger children even years after kindergarten.

There is a third study that used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999. Lin, Freeman, and Chu (2009) found that the older a child was at the beginning of kindergarten, the higher his reading and mathematics scores proved to be. The oldest group of children also made the largest gains in reading and mathematics during the kindergarten year. The trend continued in the upper elementary grades, though the differences between the oldest and youngest students were not as pronounced as in kindergarten. The researchers also examined the gains made by each age group during each year. For the first two years, the oldest group made the most gains in reading and mathematics achievement. In third grade, the trend reversed and the youngest group of students made the most gain, although the gains were similar in all age groups. In fifth grade, the trend continued with the younger children making more gains in test scores while the oldest cohort showed fewer gains.

Closer examination of the test scores revealed that the group with the oldest students had a much higher mean test score than the youngest group of students. The data showed that the younger groups may have made larger academic gains because they had more of a gap in learning to overcome in order to catch up to the older students in their grade. The data analyzed by Lin, Freeman and Chu (2009) clearly showed that older children had higher test scores in

reading and mathematics at the end of fifth grade. Though the younger children gained in academic achievement, they did not catch up to the higher academic levels of the older children.

Another study by Yesil-Dagli (2006) concurs with the research that younger children score lower than their older counterparts. In both math and reading, the older children, whether they started school on time or were redshirted, consistently scored higher in reading and mathematics than the younger children in the same cohort. The effect remained even after controlling for ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status. However, this study found that by third grade, the effect of being younger was greatly diminished. This study also examined the differences in genders of ethnic groups, especially the ones who had been redshirted. Caucasian boys who had delayed kindergarten entry scored better than Caucasian girls who had done the same. But for African-American students, the effect was reversed. The girls who had been redshirted scored higher than the boys (Yesil-Dagli, 2006).

Bassok and Reardon (2013) used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth (ELCS-B) to find a sample of 10,700 children who had been born in 2001. The children were given math and pre-literacy assessments at the ages of five and six, regardless of when they started kindergarten. Since the children had all been born in 2001, some were in kindergarten and some were not. The researchers were able to separate the children into three groups based on kindergarten cut-off dates and information about grade levels. The three groups were children who started early (greenshirts), children who started kindergarten on-time according to state cut-off dates, and children who started a year later (redshirts). Bassok and Reardon (2013) found that for the individual child, redshirting does make a difference. By creating cohorts and examining where a child fell along a continuum depending on their assessment scores as both a 5

and a 6 year old, it was determined that redshirted children scored higher than they would have if they had attended school the year before.

### **Studies on Relative Age**

Relative age is the age of a child compared to the age of all the other children in their class. This is a fairly new area of research and was first documented in the area of sports. In 1985, a group of researchers found that an overwhelming number of professional hockey athletes had birthdays that occurred in the first part of the year (Barnsley & Thompson, 1988). As they delved into the issue, they discovered that for Canadian youth hockey leagues, the cut-off date for each age group was December 31. Therefore, those children with birthdays close to, but after the cut-off, would be almost a whole year older than the athletes whose birthdays occurred at the end of the year. At the age of five years old, eleven months represents an approximately twenty percent and that age difference can account for a noticeable difference in playing ability. It is soon after this beginning age that children are chosen to participate on more competitive hockey teams. Barnsley and Thompson (1988) found that the birthdates of these chosen athletes occurred most often within the first four months after the cut-off date. The children chosen for the elite teams were most likely bigger and more coordinated because they were five percent to eighteen percent older than their peers. The coaches may have confused normal child development patterns with hockey talent (Barnsley & Thompson, 1988).

However, the researchers found the same pattern of birthdays within professional hockey leagues. If professional hockey players were selected based on natural talent, the birthdates within the league should be more uniformly dispersed throughout the year. The researchers propose that after these older players were placed on elite teams, they practiced more, played more games and were exposed to better coaching. The researchers conclude that it was not that

the children were more talented as much as they were allowed to develop their hockey skills more fully (Barnsley & Thompson, 1988).

This same phenomenon has been documented in other sports such as soccer and in different countries around the world. In the study done by Helsen, Van Winckel, and Williams (2005), the researchers pointed out that those children who felt as if they were successful in soccer tended to practice more and gained more skill. Those who were less successful dropped out because they felt that they were not talented in soccer, so they decided to stop playing the sport.

Cobley, McKenna, Baker, & Wattie (2009) found that relative age effects can be observed in secondary school. The researchers studied a particular school in England and found that older students had higher academic achievement in all subjects. There were also a higher percentage of older students in the gifted and talented program while a large percentage of the younger children in each grade were utilizing learning support programs similar to the special education program in the United States. Cobley et al. (2009) state:

It is highly probable that providing an advantaged learning environment to this group will also result in superior endpoints in other areas of endeavor (e.g., occupation). In comparison, relatively younger members of a cohort may be more likely to develop negative attitudes and behavior toward education, with self-competence and esteem problems the result of their experiences in secondary education. (pp. 526-527)

Bedard and Dhuey (2006) conducted a detailed analysis of the relative age effect using data from Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). They studied different types of educational systems, including those where all children enter school at the

same time and move on to the next level regardless of ability. The researchers found evidence that younger children score lower on both the fourth and eighth grade TIMMS assessment. The differences in test scores are quite substantial. From Bedard and Dhuey (2006):

To put this in perspective, this translates into a 4-12 percentile disadvantage for eleven months of relative age. While the age premium enjoyed by the oldest students declines between grades four and eight, there remains a 0.8-2.6 point difference, or 2-9 percentiles, between the oldest and the youngest students at the eighth grade level. These results clearly show the persistence of relative age into adolescence, and are therefore suggestive of a longer run impact. (p. 3)

Bedard and Dhuey (2006) also found that in both Canada and the United States, older students are more likely to take the SAT or ACT and they are more likely to be enrolled in a four year university after graduating from high school. These students were also more likely to complete college preparatory classes while still in high school. Bedard and Dhuey (2006) echo the findings of Cogley et al. (2009) about the presence of relative age effects in education. Relative age effects can determine long-term school success, including whether or not a child attends college. The practice of sending children to school based on an arbitrary cut-off date is creating the difference between older and younger students who end up in the same classes. Bedard and Dhuey (2006) urge educators to pay more attention to the effects of relative age in the classroom. If children from low socio-economic families are also among the youngest students in class, then they are at a disadvantage because of relative age effects, less preschool experience and less acquisition of school readiness skills before kindergarten (Bedard & Dhuey, 2006).

Martin, Foels, Clanton and Moon's (2004) study included a large number of Caucasian students in twenty-eight counties in the state of Georgia. The cutoff date was September first, so children born in the summer would constitute the youngest group of students in any cohort. The researchers found that children with summer birthdays were more likely to be retained or redshirted. The study does not treat redshirted children differently than retained children, but it does show some interesting things about children born in the summer. The youngest group of children had the highest percentage of individuals who had been diagnosed with learning disabilities. When Martin and his co-authors looked at achievement levels of each group of children, the youngest group had the lowest scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Surprisingly, that was true whether they included or excluded the group of retained students. The authors also examine the idea that young children are not as physically and emotionally mature as their class counterparts who were born in other times of the year.

Martin et al. (2004) give more credibility to their findings by pointing out that Diamond (1983) found similar results in Hawaii when their cut-off date was January 1<sup>st</sup> and the youngest group was born in the late fall. That fact is important in this particular study because the researchers discuss other factors that may be the cause of lower achievement due to psychological disorders such as autism and schizophrenia and that those factors may be related to the time of year in which the child was born (Martin et al., 2004).

The studies on the effects of relative age in the classroom indicate that there is a correlation with higher test scores and older students. However, these differences in age may affect other facets of a student's life in addition to academic performance. Leadership roles may also be based on age. In the study by Dhuey and Lipscomb (2008), the researchers found that older students occupied more leadership roles in high school than younger students within the

same grade. They found that age was the determining factor regardless of other factors including socio-economics and height at the age of 16. Dhuey and Lipscomb (2008) conclude their study by calling for more research to be done to determine how relative age effects factor into students learning leadership skills but that there does seem to be some preliminary correlation between leadership and age.

Elder (2010) used the ECLS-K study and found that younger children in a cohort are more likely to be diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In this study, the researchers had access not only to the diagnosis of ADHD, but also to the symptoms that were reported by teachers and parents. The age at which a child started school had a stronger effect on teacher perceptions of the child's behavior than the parental perceptions of their child. The researchers state that this is a troubling finding that may show that teachers are mistaking age-appropriate behavior of these younger children for symptoms of ADHD. This mistake could lead to children being inaccurately labeled as ADHD and prescribed behavior-altering drugs.

Furlong and Quirk (2011) used a sample of 980 students who had a score on the Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP) and a second grade assessment score from the California Standards Test (CST). Over 90 percent of these students were Hispanic. The researchers found that children with high KSEP scores also had higher scores on the CST. However, the research contradicts Datar's (2006) finding that low-income students benefit more from kindergarten redshirting. Instead, Furlong and Quirk (2011) found that preschool experience provided a significant impact on test scores for low income Hispanic students, but that the factor that played the biggest role in academic achievement was school readiness as measured by the KSEP.

## **Maturity Ratings**

Maturity ratings refer to a child's ability to handle specific situations compared to their chronological age. Alexander and Entwisle (1988) conducted a study that compared maturity ratings and subsequent academic achievement levels in the classroom. The researchers found that low maturity ratings predicted which child was retained in kindergarten or first grade. Alexander and Entwisle (1988) state that "children who have the ability to postpone gratification, to be socially responsive in appropriate ways, to maintain control over their emotions, and to be in a positive frame of mind apparently profit more from early schooling" (p. 104). The research seems to suggest that there is an emotional component to kindergarten preparedness.

Graziano, Reavis, Keane and Callkins (2007) studied 325 kindergarteners who came from diverse racial and economic backgrounds. The children were rated by their parents on their ability to regulate emotions. The researchers found that the higher the children had been rated on the emotion-regulation, the higher the children achieved on both standardized test scores and classroom evaluations. Graziano et al. (2007) stated that "children with better emotion regulation skills are thus better equipped to handle the qualitative shift in the learning environment that occurs during kindergarten compared to children with poor emotion regulation skills" (p. 16). The researchers also found that children with more emotion regulation skills also have more positive relationships with their teachers and fewer behavior problems in the classroom.

Raver's (2002) literature review of the major studies conducted on children in the early elementary grades concluded that succeeding in school is more than just about academic skills. How a child handles the emotional adjustment to kindergarten can play a part in long-term success. Raver (2002) states that "young children's emotional adjustment matters. Children



who are emotionally well-adjusted have a significantly greater chance of early school success while children who experience serious emotional difficulty face grade risks of early school difficulty” (p. 3).

### **Social Skills**

The literature indicates that a child’s emotional adjustment to the demands of kindergarten can impact their academic success in the early grades of school. Part of the adjustment that children have to make in kindergarten is dealing with the social aspect of classrooms. Ladd, Herald, and Kochel (2006) found that social skills are also important for children in kindergarten. The researchers gathered data from 31 kindergarten classrooms to determine how a child’s mastery of specific social tasks may affect their adjustment to school. The tasks included forming and maintaining positive social relationships with both other students and the teachers, while also avoiding victimization from peers. Ladd et al. (2006) found that those children who possessed more pro-social skills as determined by the ability to perform the tasks formed friendships that allowed them an easier transition to kindergarten. Children who had problems creating positive relationships with their teacher tended to be less engaged in classroom activities and exhibited more misbehavior.

Pagani and Allard (2011) used data from the Montreal Longitudinal Preschool Study for their study. The children in this dataset were from impoverished neighborhoods and began kindergarten in the 1998-1999 school year. During the first phase of the study, the children were rated by their kindergarten teacher on how well they got along with classmates. The follow-up study was conducted on the same children when they were in fifth and sixth grades, where the children were rated on their affiliation with popular peers. Pagani and Allard (2011) found that the kindergarten teacher rating predicted the peer affiliation rating. The higher the peer

affiliation rating was, the less likely the child was to be affiliated with peers who engaged in delinquent behaviors.

These studies suggest that there are other factors that lead to school success that are harder to measure. A child's ability to adjust to kindergarten may affect academic achievement in the early grades and social achievement in subsequent grades (Pagani & Allard, 2011). Maturity levels of children seem to have a bearing on how well they do in school not only academically (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988), but also in social contexts (Graziano et al., 2007; Ladd et al., 2006). Maturity levels could be influenced by age or experiences the children have before kindergarten entrance such as preschool attendance (Furlong & Quirk, 2011). Success in kindergarten requires more than just a mastery of basic math and literacy (Raver, 2002).

### **Studies on Retention**

If relative age effects can cause some children to acquire more skills than others, what effect does retention have on children? Retention is when a child fails to achieve certain academic standards and is forced to repeat a grade of school. Most of the research concerning what happens when children repeat a grade show that not only does the practice cause lasting harmful emotional effects, it does not increase student achievement. The children most likely to be retained in the first four years of school qualify for free and reduced lunch, come from minority ethnicities, have summer birthdays, are male. (Wake et al., 2000) Among boys, shorter children are more likely to be retained (Wake et al., 2000).

If the child suddenly becomes one of the older children in class, then the data might be expected to show similar outcomes for grade retention as we have seen in academic redshirting and relative age effects. However, the research on retention paints a different picture.

Frederick and Hauser (2006) conducted a study to see how retention rates have changed over the last three decades. They found that though there are few studies that prove that retention has a positive effect on school achievement, the rates of retention have been rising. In fact, public policy seems to ignore the research and calls for more children to be retained if they cannot meet academic standards. From Frederick and Hauser (2006):

Despite these negative or weak findings, the popular sentiment in America is that schools and teachers need to be more accountable to ensure that children progress at appropriate rates (National Education Goals Panel, Goal #8, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Many politicians, including Presidents Clinton and Bush, have made direct pleas to end social promotion (Bush 2004; Clinton 1999). Hauser (2004, 2005) warns that the annual testing in third through eighth grades mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (US Congress 2002) may increase the incidence of test-based retention. (p. 4)

Jimerson (2001) performed a meta-analysis of retention studies over a period of twenty years. He found that any increase in achievement by a retained student was short-lived and existed only when the child was learning material that had been presented to him/her before. Once the child began to learn new material (usually the subsequent year), the child again began to struggle and fall behind. The effects were not only in academics. Jimerson (2001) found:

Overall, the retained students had lower levels of academic adjustment at the end of 11th grade, were more likely to drop out of high school by age 19, were less likely to receive a diploma by age 20, were less likely to be enrolled in a postsecondary education program, received lower education/employment status ratings, were paid less per hour, and

received poorer employment competence ratings at age 20 in comparison to a group of low-achieving students. (p. 422)

The emotional and social effects of retention are so pervasive that many children never recover. They have a negative attitude toward school and lower self-esteem (Carlton & Winsler, 1999). Carlton and Winsler's (1999) article also showed that retained children performed worse on standardized tests than those children who were socially promoted. It would seem that though retention is a prevalent practice in the United States, there are few studies that can show a positive outcome for the students who have been retained. Instead of retained students catching up to their peers and continuing the increase in academics, any gains are temporary (Jimerson, 2001).

Retention is included in the redshirting debate because some parents think that if their child does not perform well in kindergarten, then their child can simply repeat kindergarten and catch up. If that hypothesis was true, then the data should show an increase in test scores for retained children. The data fail to support the idea of a child repeating kindergarten will increase the child's academic achievement (Jimerson, 2001).

### **Literacy Concerns**

The literature implies that relative age plays a factor in student achievement, especially in the first three grades of elementary school. This should be a concern to educators since the arbitrary assignment of children to be the youngest or oldest in each class is dependent on district-mandated cut-off dates. If relative age relegates the youngest students to arbitrarily being academically and socially disadvantaged, it is the school's responsibility to ameliorate those

effects. Literacy research offers some valuable insights about how relative age effects could cause long-term educational literacy issues in the lives of children.

The field of education research is replete with studies on literacy. Some researchers say you can predict who will be a poor student in high school by looking at their literacy skills in the first grade. From Foster and Miller's (2007) work on the literacy gap:

Juel (1988) found an 88% probability of being a poor reader in the fourth grade if a student is identified as a poor reader in the first grade. Shaywitz and colleagues (1999) and Francis, Fletcher, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, and Rourke (1996) showed the students who had been identified as having significant reading problems in the elementary grades continued to have significant deficits in high school. (p. 171)

Foster and Miller (2007) also discuss the Matthew effect which refers to the phenomenon that children who enter school with many pre-reading skills acquire more complex literacy skills as they get older. The children who enter kindergarten without these same skills do not gain more complex skills as quickly and begin to fall farther and farther behind their peers. In terms of literacy skills, the "rich get richer - poor get poorer" (Foster & Miller, 2007, p 174). The researchers also state that intervention strategies for struggling readers after the 4<sup>th</sup> grade help only 13 percent of those struggling students. Starting school with few reading skills becomes, for many students, an insurmountable problem, and schools must work much harder in the early grades to help these students catch up. Foster and Miller (2007) found that socio-economic status of the child is a further indicator of reading skills:

There is a growing body of literature that suggests that school readiness is primarily a function of socio-economic resources (e.g. Roscigno, 2000; Roscigno & Ainsworth-

Darness, 1999; Blair, Blair & Madamba, 1999; Levine & Eubanks, 1990). Foster (2001) showed that the greatest contributing factor to school readiness was the socioeconomic status of the child's family. (p. 175)

Children from homes with lower socio-economic status usually are not redshirted (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). Redshirting is an expensive option when both parents work or when the child comes from a single-parent household. An extra year outside of public education represents an extra year of daycare or preschool costs. Impoverished students will typically be younger than the other children in class. Since they are also entering school with fewer literacy skills than their peers (Foster & Miller, 2007), they are already behind their peers in terms of academics on the first day of kindergarten.

### **Conclusions**

The studies on relative age effects reveal a distinct difference between the oldest and the youngest child in the class. Academic redshirting changes a child's birth order in class by putting them in the oldest group of students rather than the youngest group. The parent of a redshirted child is essentially choosing to which group their child will belong. To illustrate the decision, take a child with a July 31<sup>st</sup> birthday who lives in a district where the kindergarten cut-off is August 1<sup>st</sup>. That child could legally start school at the age of 5. However, if his parents chose to do so, he could wait a year and start kindergarten at the age of 6. The first scenario would most likely result in the child being the youngest one in his class, if not the youngest student in the whole grade. The second scenario would make him one of the oldest in his class. This is a difficult issue to study since a child either is kept out a year or is not. Once a child is redshirted, the decision cannot be reversed (Oshima & Domaleski, 2006).

The research conducted concerning relative age provide evidence that simply being older compared to a child's classmates increases the potential for higher reading and math skills (Datar, 2006; Diamond, 1983; Lin, Freeman & Chu, 2009; Oshima & Domaleski, 2006; Yesil-Dagli, 2006) and lessens the child's risk of being retained in elementary school (Martin et al., 2004). Retaining a child after kindergarten does not have the same effect as redshirting and may do more harm in the long run (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Jimerson, 2001).

This study will examine the parental perception of their child's academic, emotional and social experiences in school through the lens of a parent who chose for their child to be among the oldest in his/her grade. The perceptual data can provide information about what aspects of a child's life may be affected by their relative age in an elementary class. This study will also examine how parents made the decision to redshirt their child. Understanding the decision-process will enable researchers to help other parents through this process.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methods**

This study was a phenomenological qualitative study with interviews. This approach was selected because the practice of redshirting has not been examined from the parental perspective. Understanding parental perceptions of kindergarten redshirting is important because parents are the primary decision-makers about whether or not their child is redshirted. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) say that “reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings. Therefore, it is the researcher’s role to understand the multiple realities from the perspectives of participants” (p. 9). Though quantitative studies may provide evidence of higher test scores, the realities of how redshirting affects the lives of children can be seen more clearly from the parental perspective.

Twenty parents were chosen to complete an interview. Typical interviews lasted 20 minutes, though one interview lasted 48 minutes. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview model. A list of questions was asked of each participant, but follow-up questions varied based on factors that parents felt were most important to discuss about their child. For some participants, the order of the questions was changed if the parents brought up certain aspects of redshirting before the question was asked. Allowing the participants the freedom to elaborate on aspects of redshirting that they found particularly helpful for their child informed the research about what aspects should be studied in more detail.

The interview model was the most appropriate choice of methodology for the chosen research questions. Parents are the primary decision makers in the redshirting process, yet research has not examined their thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon. The interviews



provide a more detailed examination of how much parents attribute the long-term socio-emotional effects of their child to the redshirting phenomenon.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework behind this study was social constructivism. Parents constructed their own perceptions of their child's abilities based on many factors including their own past experiences in school, comparisons of their child with other children and knowledge of child development. In many cases, the data they used to form objective opinions were filtered through their own biases and experiences.

In order to allow each parent the opportunity to describe their perception of kindergarten redshirting, I allowed the participants the freedom to describe not only the factors they felt were important in the decision-making process, but also the particular traits in their child they were concerned about. By listening to parents describe particular skills or details of their child that were most affected by kindergarten redshirting, a picture formed of their perceptions. The same method was used to determine what types of outcomes the parents attribute to their child's relative age among their peers in not only academic success, but in other areas as well such as peer-relations and sports involvement.

Figure 3.1

#### **Theoretical Framework**

<b>Epistemology: Social Constructivism</b>
Construct the parental perception of why they chose to kindergarten redshirt their child and the factors they used to make that decision. Perceptions of outcomes of that decision were also described.
<b>Theoretical Perspective: Interpretive</b>
The researcher used the descriptions provided by participants to construct their decision-making process and identified the important factors these parents had in common.
<b>Methodology: Phenomenology</b>
This study described the experiences of parents who have chosen to kindergarten redshirt their

child.
<b>Methods: Semi-structured Interviews</b>
There were basic questions that every parent was asked, but the parents were allowed to talk about any aspect they thought was important to describing their experience.

## Sampling

The sampling method was purposeful in order to find participants that match the criteria for the study. The participants in this study were parents who purposefully held their child out of school for a year before they began kindergarten. The original sample of parents came from a posting on *Facebook* by a colleague. After the initial contact with those participants, snowballing was used to find other parents be willing to participate in the study. A large proportion (14 out of 20) of the participants was teachers, most likely because the colleague who posted the original *Facebook* message is a teacher in Northwest Arkansas. A second post calling for participants was made approximately one month later. Additionally, I contacted three people who were personally known to me to have redshirted their child.

The parents were given a letter that stated the purpose of the research study and included the contact information of the researcher so that could contact me for further details about the study. Participants were also given the Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study so that they understood that they could refuse to answer a question or stop the interview at any point. None of the participants in this study either refused to answer a question or stopped the interview. The time frame between the first *Facebook* post and the conclusion of interviews was six weeks.

The interviews were conducted by interviewing the participants in person and over the telephone. Thirteen of the interviews were conducted in person with parents in Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers and Siloam Springs, which are all cities in Northwest Arkansas. Seven of the

interviews were conducted over the phone with parents from Springdale, Searcy, Hope, Harrison and Rogers, which are all cities and towns in Arkansas.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were parents who had redshirted their children. An attempt was made to include both male and female parents, but only three of the parents in the study were male. Parents who agreed to be included in the study determined where the interview took place. This allowed for the participant to feel comfortable in their surroundings. Some of the phone interviews took place while Northwest Arkansas was experiencing severe winter weather and travel was not recommended.

The data collected about participants will be discussed in more detail in chapter four. Income level and race of the families in this study were comparable to what prior research has shown about parents who redshirt their children. All of the participants in the study reported incomes of at least \$40,000. Nineteen of the twenty participants were married and reported incomes over \$80,000 per year. All of the parents in the study had at least some college education, while seventeen of the twenty had finished college and nine of those had gone on to receive Master's degrees.

### **Information Needed**

In order to collect the data needed to answer the research questions, I needed to know the steps that each parent took in the decision-making process including how they chose to research the problem. The parents described the factors that were important to them in the decision to redshirt their child as well as the outcomes they felt the decision has had on their child's experience in school. Many of the parents in the study stated one main reason for their decision at the beginning of the interview, and then added more reasons as the interview progressed.

It was important for me to collect other information about both the parents and their children as well. The household income as well as marital status allowed me to compare the parents in this study to previous research participants. Knowing in which state the parent lived when their child was redshirted yielded information about differences in policies regarding how children are screened (or not screened) for kindergarten readiness and the steps that were taken to help children who were not deemed ready for kindergarten.

Information about the children involved in this study was also important. Information about the current grade level of each child explained some of the differences in parental perception about how redshirting affected social, emotional and academic outcomes. Other information about the children including the extent of sports and other extra-curricular activities also provided more information about the overall effect of kindergarten redshirting.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face and telephone interviews with parents who met the criteria of choosing to redshirt their child(ren) before kindergarten. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. After I received the finished transcriptions, I listened to each interview again as I read through the transcriptions to ensure accuracy. The transcripts were analyzed with the help of Microsoft Excel to keep track of statistics and codes. The interviews were semi-structured so that “interviewees are asked the same basic questions. By standardizing the interviews to some degree, the researcher preserves a degree of comparability across interviews” (Shank, 2006, p. 50). Some of the questions were asked in a different order if the participant brought up the subject first. After the interview and transcription processes were completed, the participants were sent an electronic copy of their interview so they could check for accuracy. No participant

asked for changes to be made to the transcript of their interview. All participants in the study will be given the final results of the study if they have requested that information.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using coding techniques and the triangulation of transcripts, journal notes taken during the interviews and peer reviews from other researchers. Certain key words used by parents determined the codes. The emergent codes from the transcripts revealed four main reasons given by parents as an answer to the question, “Thinking back to when you were deciding about redshirting your child, what were the main reasons you were considering it?” The codes were “not ready for kindergarten,” “it is better to be older when they start school,” “it is better to be older in high school,” and “someone suggested my child wasn’t ready.” Though parents gave one answer at the beginning, as the interviews progressed, many of the parents began to add other codes to their reasoning. Some of these new codes included “older children do better,” “boys need more time than girls,” and “worried about how small my child was.”

### **Ethical Issues**

One of the ethical issues in this study was confidentiality. Since respondents were recommending other participants, it was important that no one could assign interview responses to specific persons. All the participants in this study were given pseudonyms so that their quotes could not be traced back directly to them or to their child. A list of the original names and the assigned pseudonym is under a password protection. A hard copy of the information was kept in a locked room.

Another ethical issue was that of maintaining a positive outlook for parents who have redshirted their children. I made sure that the participants were never made to think as though

they had made a mistake in redshirting their children. Great care was taken to ensure that parental thoughts and feelings were kept in the utmost regard.

My personal bias was constantly evaluated during this study. My husband and I redshirted our son so I had a unique link to the parents I interviewed. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) advise that researchers should “continually monitor their own subjective perspectives and biases by recording reflective field notes or keeping a journal throughout the research project” (p.77). I tried to be careful not to introduce bias into the study by valuing some aspects of parental perspectives higher than others based on my own personal beliefs of how redshirting has affected my child.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was kept in high regard in this research study. Participants were asked to review the transcripts so that an accurate account of their thoughts can be collected. There was documentation of the interviews by the digital recordings, transcripts and also by notes taken during the interviews. At the conclusion of each interview, I recorded my overall impression of the interview including the body language the participant conveyed during the interview. Peers were asked to examine the data to assure that my codes and conclusions accurately portrayed the phenomenon described by the participants. The interviews and notations were used to triangulate the data collected about how parents perceive redshirting and how they thought that it had affected their child.

As a researcher using social constructivism, it was important for me to acknowledge my own background and experiences that allowed me to be more immersed in the framework described by my participants. Not only did I redshirt my own child, but my parents redshirted me as a young child. However, I was not aware of this fact until I was out of college, instead

believing that I was among the oldest in my grade because of chance. The decision-making process for me and my husband was based on our knowledge of child development and our experiences as teachers. We believed that the maturationist construct of learning applies not only to kindergarten readiness, but also to learning in the later grades. I remember specifically anticipating that my son's ability to use abstract reasoning would be shaped more by his age and development than by his experiences in school. Because of my intimate experiences with redshirting, it was important for me to conduct member checks with the participants to assure that I accurately depicted their perceptions as well as let my peers review my findings.

### **Limitations**

Limitations exist in every study. In this particular study, there is the limitation of this sample not being big enough to generalize to other parents in America who are struggling with this decision. There may be issues that are very specific to certain parents that were not addressed in this study. There also may be issues related to only the participants in this study that may not apply to another parent. The large number of teachers in this study may resonate with other educators, but it may not help parents who do not have that professional educator background to make the same decision for their child.

Another limitation is geography. Only parents who lived in close proximity to the University of Arkansas were interviewed in person. While some of the interviews occurred over the phone, only three of the interviews included parents who lived more than 50 miles away from Northwest Arkansas. The experiences of the parents and students in one state may not be similar to students in other states. Two of the parents in the study lived in other states when their child attended kindergarten, but the sample size would be too small to draw any conclusions about those states from this study.

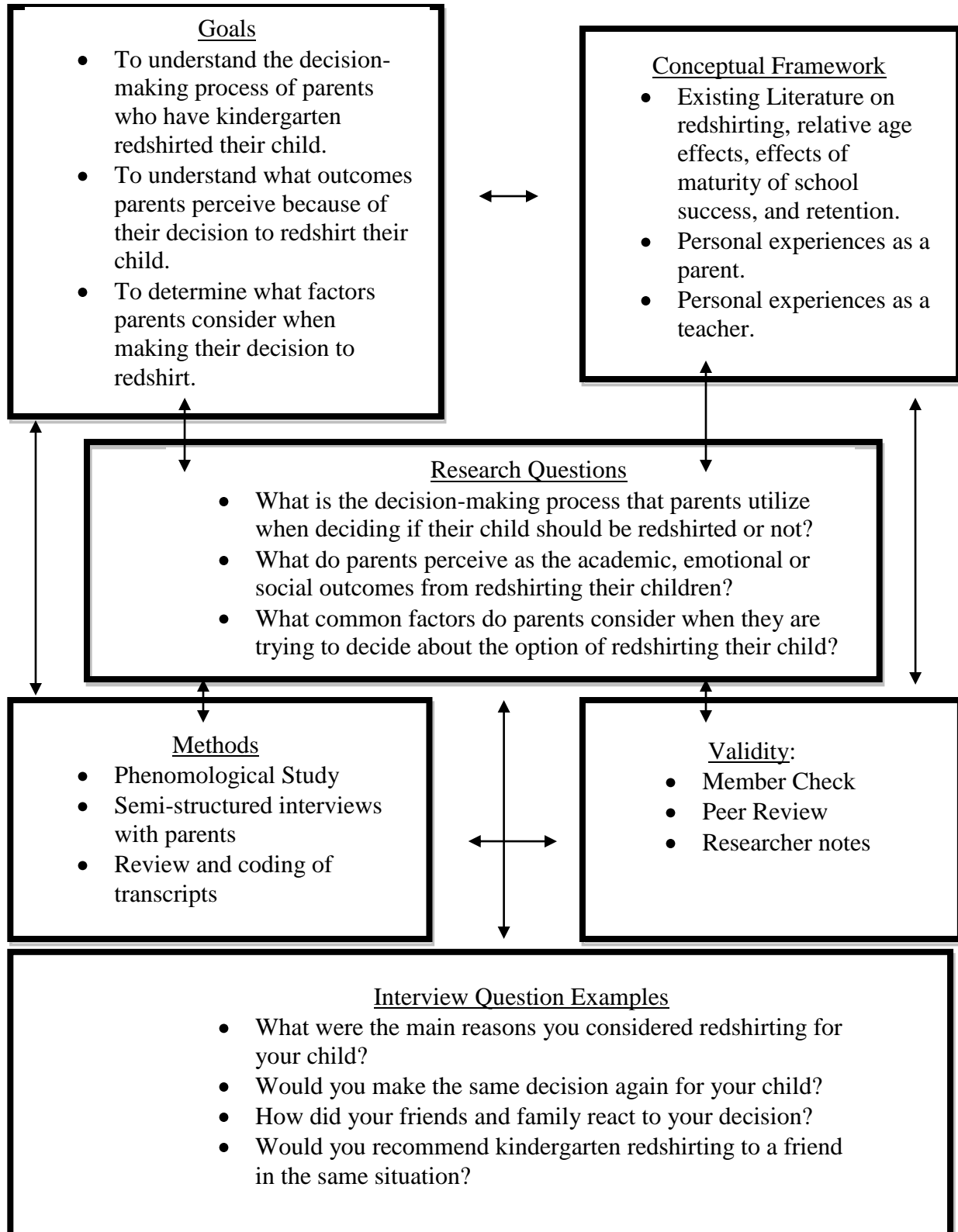
## **Timeline**

The first phase of this study was to propose the study to my dissertation committee and to attain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. This took approximately two weeks after meeting with my dissertation committee and making the necessary changes to the proposal based on their recommendations. The next phase was IRB approval, which may took one week. The interview phase took six weeks to complete. The transcription of the interviews will also be started during this phase. The coding and data analysis took another three weeks.



Figure 3.2

Concept Map



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Results**

#### **Coding Process**

The next step in this study was to analyze the interviews to determine what factors parents considered when they were deciding whether or not to redshirt their children, what aspects of their child's schooling they thought redshirting had affected and to find themes that were common to each situation. This chapter will describe the data collected from the interviews as well as describe the parents in the study and their children.

The coding process of analyzing the interviews in this study followed a series of categorizing to look for emerging themes, then repeating the process again. The first process of categorizing the transcripts focused on the participants answer to the question, "Thinking back to when you were deciding about redshirting your child, what were the main reasons you were considering that option?" The intent of the question was to determine the primary reason the parent chose to redshirt their child. The initial categorization yielded four categories:

- 1) Parental view of child development that being older compared to peers provides benefits for children in school.
- 2) Parental view that being older in high school and college provides benefits for their child.
- 3) Their child was not ready for kindergarten.
- 4) Someone else suggested that redshirting their child would be beneficial for the child.

When parents answered the first question in the interview about their reasons, they seemed to explain their reasoning fully as if they had been asked this question before and were confident about their answer. Parents stated

Well he has a September 9<sup>th</sup> birthday and so I knew that was late, and in knowing he had until October 1<sup>st</sup> he could have gone off to school but because it was September 9<sup>th</sup> and because he was a boy and traditionally boys mature younger... slower than girls, and that played into my decision. Plus he would still be 17 if he went on to college if I had let him start school that year. And I just thought that was way too young to leave home and go off to college and so I just thought I can put that off a year. And I wanted him to be the first in his class to do things versus almost one of the very last. Annie R.

At the end of that year it was confirmed, my thought process was confirmed. I did not feel like her reading or her academics even for a kindergartener was up to that of her peers. As a teacher, I probably had her in a higher level than most and we also made the decision that due to the late birthday, we were not prepared, looking forward, we were not prepared for her to go to college at such a young age. Katherine A.

Well, it was the only...I always knew that I would and I can't name any specifics. One, this sounds a little selfish, but I was a stay-at-home mom so daycare, childcare, none of that was a problem and my thoughts have always been just to give her any kind of advantage in life that I could. I wanted to do that so I was...I never felt like...even at birth I just knew that. I have never felt like she was behind. I have never felt like she was far ahead, I felt like she was an average child so that didn't... I was just whatever

advantage I could give her, I was going to do that. I knew that from day one. And that was one of the things that I knew I could do. Sharon T.

However, as in many cases of qualitative research, these four themes seemed to change as the parents progressed through the interviews. Though the parents were succinct about their main reasons for redshirting, it was clear that each one of them had found several other reasons to justify their decision. It was not as if the parents simply made the decision and then looked for confirmation as the child became older, but that the parents kept analyzing their thoughts about child development until they arrived at their final decision. Subsequent interview questions revealed that parents in this study had very clear ideas about child development even if they never vocalized those beliefs as the main reason for redshirting. Using what the parents answered to the first question and combining it with their answers to subsequent questions, an underlying theme began to emerge related to the parental view that being older is better than being younger when a child is in school. Many of the parents were operating from the maturationist view of child development which posits that children cannot learn until they are developmentally ready to do so (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). The parents also thought that maturity levels in kindergarten could affect how well the child learned and adjusted to the demands of formal education. The four original coding themes became the following themes:

- 1) Being older is more advantageous for emotional and social aspects of school.
- 2) Being older is more advantageous for physical aspects of school such as sports.
- 3) Being older is more advantageous for academic aspects of school.

## Reasons for Redshirting

Though their original reasoning for redshirting seemed to be personalized to their own child, their answers to subsequent interview questions indicated a knowledge that they knew they were choosing for their child to be among the oldest in their grade and a belief that being older would provide their child with more advantages than a younger child. The following table outlines the reasons parents gave as justification for redshirting their children.

Table 4.1: Parental Reasons for Kindergarten Redshirting

Reason Given	Frequency of First Mention	Frequency of Subsequent Mention
<b>Older is better</b>	10	2
<b>Maturity in Kindergarten</b>	4	2
<b>Developmentally Behind Peers</b>	3	1
<b>Recommended by School</b>	2	0
<b>Maturity in High School</b>	1	9
<b>When their child could drive a car</b>	0	9
<b>Age at College Entry</b>	0	3
<b>Physical Size</b>	0	3
<b>Redshirting was common</b>	0	3
<b>No rush to send to school</b>	0	1
<b>Lived out of country</b>	0	1

Several parents were concerned about the emotional aspects of school. The concerns in the early grades came from adjusting to the demands of school. These parents were not concerned with the academic level of their child in kindergarten. In fact, several parents stated that their child would have been academically on par with kindergarten standards. They were more concerned about the long term effects, particularly how behavior in school could affect the academic achievement of their child. Parents shared:

Well for I guess since she was younger, it was a lot of behavior. There's a definite difference between (because we had her do preschool twice) there is a huge difference between the year that she was four and the year that she was five. Her maturity level and

behavior because of how she acted with other kids and also how she interacted with her teachers. Tracy R.

Yes we always felt that he, intelligence wise, that he was ready, and he could've handled it. But Joshua was always...he was very sensitive and he always felt that there were situations where like for example if someone took his toy, immediately he would start crying and he just...he was very sensitive to if someone else...something happened to them, he'd take that very personally and it would upset him. He was just very easily upset. I think he's very tender hearted. And so that was part of the reason but I think there are a lot of reasons. Michael G.

I knew I did not want her to go to school for six... maybe six to seven weeks at four years old and... and also she was... I mean she was immature in some ways so that's the main concern. I also knew that she was going to have to (at that time there were just two kindergarten teachers in the building) and she was going to have to distinguish me from being mommy and me being a teacher and I think she just wasn't ready for that. Cheryl C.

Parents were also concerned about the emotional aspects of dealing with the demands of school in the secondary grades as well as how being older would help their child adjust to the transition to college. For these parents, they reasoned that being younger compared to their peers in the same grade would cause social difficulties including dealing with dating and peer pressure. There was a concern with many of the parents in the study about when the child would be able to

drive a car compared to when their friends would be able to drive. Another concern was the age at which they would go to college. The general belief from the parents who had a concern about this factor was that it would be better if their child were a year older at the time of high school graduation. Christie R. stated:

Yeah, mainly as he became the 14 or 15 or 16 year old I didn't want him lagging behind in that area. Because he was smart enough to be in kindergarten and he was you know, he was very gifted in that way and still is. But yeah for us it was just the time that he would be able to drive. We didn't want him to be the last one to be doing everything. So that was probably our main reason.

With our daughter, it was really... maturity, she was fine even in her early years. She seemed equally mature to her peers. It was strictly a down the road, I do not want her to be dating at 15 in high school, the driving issue being in a car with other people, going to college and she's only 17 years old. It was strictly a decision based on that. Shelly P.

Well I did think about her always being the youngest and the peer pressure, would she be ready to handle the peer pressure and you know just what they have to deal with in high school with the drugs, and alcohol and sex and things like that. So I did think about that, I wanted her to be one of the older ones to make those decisions instead of the youngest. Cheryl C.

Almost half of the parents (9 out of 20) voiced concern about when their child would be legally able to drive a car compared to their child's peers. It is interesting that this concern was brought up by the parents because none of the interview questions referred to this aspect of

developmental milestones. The parents wanted their child to be among the first to be able to drive instead of among the last. Janice G. stated “I thought a lot about that, like I thought about him being the first of his friends to be able to drive and him the one behind the wheel rather than them.”

Some parents were concerned about the size of their child and felt that being small would not be beneficial either in the early grades or later on in high school. Three of the children who had been redshirted had been born premature. These parents worried about the size of their child as well as the fact that they seemed to be reaching developmental milestones later than their peers. Carol O. stated:

Well, one because they were born premature, they were much smaller than a lot of the other kids that they could have gone on with. That was, you know, one thing. And another thing, we looked at the social aspects of it, are they socially ready to go? Are they mature enough to go? And then, you know, we looked at their... just their abilities, you know education wise how they were learning things in Pre-K.

So knowing that it was my first child and he was born so early and I'm trying to look at all the milestones. His milestones as he was growing were so far behind everybody else I read about, everybody that I saw. He didn't walk until he was almost a year and a half old (a week away from 18 months). He didn't walk. Everything was behind. Everything. So as he's growing, as he was born, he was a toddler and as he's in school, I'm just sitting there thinking do I put him in school knowing he's always been behind and he's a boy, so he's maybe going to be more behind anyway? Not all are, I know that. But I'm sitting here you know staying at home with him. Steve worked all the time so it was always me



paying attention, me reading to him and everything. And he's very smart but the school setting is different than a home setting. And speech wasn't developmentally delayed he just, I just say he didn't have much to say but. And mind you, he made it up for all that but after I was watching all that when I got to the time where I had to make a decision and he was so small, he was so small. Nancy G.

But I mean in the sense that... you know what I mean sports probably wouldn't mix in there with his size because he is, he's a little guy. Like he's five but most of his clothes are like four T like he's kind of... and you know you go to his preschool class where he's five and everybody's four and he looks about their size. So you know that probably, we probably thought some sports about that, but just overall size, and, his size in general was a pretty big part of it too. Candace J.

### **Gathering Data for Their Decision**

The decision-making process could be categorized into three categories based on when and how the parents first began considering redshirting their child and the way they conducted research to support their decision. The first category of parents began thinking about redshirting their children very early in the child's life. Many of the parents in this category were teachers and claimed to notice that younger children in their classrooms did not fare as well as the older students. When their own child was born close to the kindergarten cut-off date, they immediately started the process of collecting information about redshirting as well as possible consequences of their decision. Very few of these parents consulted anyone outside of their

immediate friends and family to gain information about redshirting. The teachers in the study were very confident about making this decision with no help from colleagues. Rachel C. shared:

But the thing that always stuck out in my mind is since I taught first grade and I could tell you the kids...the ones who were a little more immature I can practically name the month they were born. You know what I'm saying. If it was a spring birthday I could tell you mainly if it was boys, girls I couldn't tell as much unless they were really, really but honestly girls I couldn't tell as much. Boys I could tell you if they had a spring birthday and almost which month it was.

Yeah, I mean... and I can... you know you can tell all the way up who the younger kids are versus... you know I can tell which kids have earlier birthdays and later birthdays in the classroom I mean that's... that's all the way up. James J.

The second category of parents began considering redshirting when their child was still a few years from starting kindergarten. These parents spent a great deal of time studying their child in relation to other children in order to determine the best course of action. In some cases, the decision was made just before the deadline to register for kindergarten. In fact, three of the children of parents in this category attended preschool graduation and then went back to preschool. This category of parents talked to the largest variety of outside sources when compared to the other two groups. They talked to friends, relatives, preschool teachers, elementary teachers and even secondary teachers about possible ramifications of their decision. One parent said that she tried to find information on the internet about redshirting, but there was very little information on the subject. Tracy R. said "Yeah I did try to find just different groups

or different research just you know or even if there is a check list on what's normal developmentally, maturity levels, academic levels and couldn't really find a whole lot.”

The third category of parents only considered redshirting as an option when someone else recommended it based solely on their child's characteristics. One parent received a letter from the school that recommended the child for junior kindergarten, which in that state was designed for children who were not quite ready for kindergarten based on a readiness conference with a school official. The parents in this category spent time talking to other parents who had been in the same situation to determine what would be best for their child. This group also had the least amount of time to consider their decision. Leslie Y. shared:

I didn't know anything about redshirting until we had this Pre-K conference in the spring towards the end of the school year for Pre-K. And his teacher brought it up. We had already registered him for kindergarten and the teacher said, well you know, he's a boy, he has an August birthday, you might want to consider it. Sometimes the... that extra year is helpful and we just started...we had lived here. We did a major move back east, so it coincided with the move, so we decided to do Pre-K so that's how it came about.

The majority (fourteen of twenty) of the participants stated that the decision was not a difficult one. Two of the participants stated that the decision was not difficult on the basis of knowing it was the best for their child, yet figuring out a way to pay for the extra year of daycare was stressful. However, three of the participants indicated the decision was a difficult one because they had trouble deciding if their child really should be redshirted or if they would be better off attending kindergarten. Paula E. stated:

Yeah it was a very difficult decision because we debated for a long...I mean the whole year that he was four, the whole year we ...my husband, we talked about it the whole year, we kept thinking. Because he was ...he had done Pre School the three and the four year class and they graduated, they've a big graduation ceremony and even when he graduated we still weren't 100 percent sure what we were going to do. We let him go ahead and graduate because we didn't want him to miss it in case we did start him. And yeah it was a very, it was very difficult but I think we both knew in our hearts that whole year because he was so rambunctious. I mean literally he could not sit still more than 10 minutes, even at preschool. And we just said that he would just be miserable and I think my husband had such a bad experience, he went to a really small school, really small town and he was the same way his mom said he couldn't sit still and he just hated school and I did not want that, I wanted him to enjoy school, that's...that yeah. So it was difficult but we made the right decision.

Several of the parents in the study thought that redshirting was particularly effective for boys. One of the questions in the interview asked if they would have redshirted their child if he/she had been a different gender. Eleven of the participants said they would have redshirted their child regardless of gender, while the other nine were not sure what their ultimate decision would have been.

I'd probably ... just because based on my experiences of being a first grade teacher; I never had that issue with girls. I just did not have the immaturity issue that I did with spring birthday boys as I did spring and even summer birthday girls. I never had the issue. Rachel C.

Well that did come into play because they tell you that boys are like six months behind in maturity. So then if he would have gone to kindergarten he would have been five years and one month. Tracy R.

Parents were also asked if they would make the same decision again based on the experiences their child has had in school up to that point. Nineteen out of the twenty said they would make the same decision again to redshirt their child. When asked if they would recommend redshirting to a friend in the same situation, fifteen of the twenty said yes, while the other five parents said that it would depend on the circumstances involved with the friend's child. Janice G. stated:

I will say it will have to depend on the child I want to be careful to say every kid should do this. But if someone came to me and said and I think I would ask them some pointed questions, how do they handle when this happens when that happens. Are there a lot of tears when things don't go their way? That would be key for me right there, not so much can they read write and do all that stuff. Those are stories that you tell someone that's asking you, "Is your kid going to do that? Do you think that's a possibility? Is your kid going to need a teddy bear down in the class for the first month to get through the morning? And what do the other kids think about that?" You know those are good questions, so that would be what I do.

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were all adults who had made the decision to redshirt their child. It is helpful to understand the group of participants by examining information about their

children. The group of twenty parents referred to a group of twenty children, though not on a one-to-one ratio. Some parents were interviewed in pairs and talked about the one child they had redshirted. Three of the parents in the study had redshirted two of their children and information about each child was collected.

The majority of children redshirted in this study were boys (thirteen out of twenty), while only seven of the children were girls. Eleven of those children were the youngest in their family, while three were the oldest and three were middle children. There was one only child and one set of twins. At the time of the interviews, the children represented a wide range of current school grades. Nine of the children were in secondary school (grades 7-12), six of the children were in elementary school, one child was in preschool, one child was in college and three were college graduates.

Every child attended some form of preschool, pre-kindergarten program or private kindergarten program during the year before they began kindergarten. This study focused on redshirting, so it must be pointed out that though three children attended kindergarten during the redshirt year, which should not be considered the same circumstance as children who have been retained in kindergarten for academic reasons. In two of these cases, the parents purposefully sent their children to a private kindergarten instead of a preschool because they wanted their child to be academically challenged. In one case, the child attended a public kindergarten. The parent purposefully chose not only for her child to attend the same school for both kindergarten years, but she chose the same teacher for both years. However, it is worth mentioning the parent regretted this decision. The child had trouble adjusting to a new set of friends while also seeing her old friends in the same school, but a year ahead of her. Katherine A. said that it took three years before the child accepted her new circle of friends.

She had a hard time. She kept saying “I’m supposed to be in first grade,” and so in the transition year, that year was a difficult one, the transition year the following year, she was very, very attached to the class above her. We are in fourth grade just now, third and fourth grade were... it took a good three years to let go of that. I would not in any way shape or form do that again for her. I would not do the same place twice. That was just... their minds just couldn’t... my idea was that it furthered their academics. So I thought the transition would be easy and that it would be better for her just to keep on. It wasn’t and I wouldn’t do it again.

Table 4.2: Child Educational Environment during the Redshirt Year

<b>Year before Kindergarten</b>	
<b>Preschool, 5 full days a week</b>	10
<b>Preschool, 3 half days a week</b>	6
<b>Private kindergarten</b>	2
<b>Public kindergarten</b>	1
<b>Junior kindergarten</b>	1

The demographics of the parents in the study also provided a clearer picture about the type of parent who chooses to redshirt their child. Ten of the parents interviewed had household income levels of above \$120,000 a year, while nine had incomes of \$80,000 to \$120,000. The one parent who had an income in the range of \$40,000 to \$80,000 was also the only unmarried parent in the study. Nine of the parents in the study had master’s degrees, while eight had bachelor’s degrees. The other three participants had some college education. Fourteen of the parents were teachers or had been teachers at some point in their careers.

## Effects of Redshirting

During the interview, parents were asked to describe the type of effect that they believe redshirting had on specific aspects of their child's education. Some parents shared that there had not been enough time to accurately gauge the effect because of the young age of their child.

These responses have been coded as "not applicable" or N/A.

Table 4.3: Parental Responses for Effects of Redshirting

	Positive	Negative	No Effect	N/A
<b>Reading</b>	17		3	
<b>Math</b>	19		1	
<b>Overall Grades</b>	15		3	2
<b>Dealing with Friends</b>	14	2	2	2
<b>Confidence</b>	13	1		6
<b>Behavior in School</b>	15		4	1
<b>Dealing with Bullying or Negative Social Situations</b>	10		7	3
<b>Sports</b>	13		5	2

From the parental perspective of the parents in this study, there were many positive effects of redshirting and few negative effects. In fact, there were only three negative effects listed in all the interviews. Closer examination of those negative ratings found that they came from one parent who had placed both of her children into kindergarten during the redshirt year. This was Katherine A's response to the question, "Do you feel redshirting has had a positive effect in dealing with friends?"

I do not... looking back I do not and both girls will tell you the same thing. I do not believe the way I did it was correct. I would... my oldest is more mature both academically and socially than her counterparts and it has made life very difficult.



The highest frequencies of positive effects were in the categories reading, math, overall grades and behavior in school. Though many parents in the study believed their child was academically ready for kindergarten, they did not think their child was ready for the emotional and behavioral expectations. Waiting an additional year helped prepare their child and had a positive impact on their education. Annie R. said:

I think he was more mature. I think maybe that probably he was able to understand what was required of school behavior. Some of his teachers were not the nicest people to be around. And he and I would talk about that but being a year older, it helped him deal with his teachers, some of his teachers he had to deal with.

The parents were asked early on in the interview if they thought about sports when they were considering redshirting their children. Four of the parents said that they did suppose that redshirting would help their child later on in sports, but that it was not the primary factor in their decision. However, later on in the interview, when the parents were asked if redshirting had a positive effect on their child's ability to play sports, thirteen of the twenty said they had seen positive effects. So, while these parents acknowledged that there were positive effects, none of them said that sports ability was the primary reason they redshirted their child. Fifteen out of the twenty children in the study were playing some type of sport at the time of the interview, including one collegiate athlete. Rachel C. commented:

Would I say it has helped? Yes like this year, but that was never a reason I did it, I never even knew, I mean I always wanted him to be well rounded but I never... sports never entered my mind, academics did before sports.

The boys no. We saw that she had some ability early on. The boys didn't have as much interest so it really didn't play into that factor. It was strictly more maturity and academics. And the girl, a little bit. I wouldn't have done it solely based on that but...

Shelly P.

And honestly I was thinking a lot because I knew his dad was big into sports. He was a football player in high school and that he was going to want Daniel to participate in sports and do that kind of thing and so as a mom, my fear was that I didn't want him to be the littlest guy out there. So I wanted him to be big in sports and that did factor into my decision. Dana R.

### **Common Factors**

There are a few factors common to every parent in this survey. Each of them had a child with a birthday within four months of the kindergarten cut-off date. Each of the parents could afford to keep their child in a full-time preschool or could afford to stay home with the child another year. However, each child in this study attended some sort of educational setting the year before kindergarten such as a preschool or kindergarten, so even the stay-at-home parents opted to send their child to preschool. And each of the parents seemed to have a general idea that being among the oldest in a grade was more advantageous than being among the youngest.

Another factor that several of the parents had in common was a personal experience or a family member's experience that helped shape their views about the differences students encounter being the one of the younger children in school. Seven of the parents relayed anecdotes of family members or their own personal experiences of being the youngest in their grade while three of the parents had been redshirted or retained as children. James J. said:

I was a June birthday as well, end of June he's beginning of June, and just I didn't, well I struggled up until ninth or, tenth grade. I didn't make great grades until then and just, remembering being the last one to do everything, driving, you know just being one of the younger ones. There were things that were difficult about that, you know and also part of it, for us was she has a nephew that was a September birthday and I have a brother that was a September birthday and they both really had a hard time.

Well for one was because my brother was young for his grade, he had a September birthday, and so when he went to college when he was only 17. And I had watched him and I think my mom had wished that she had start had held him back to start later so that played into it. Michelle L.

### **Underlying Theme**

Each parent in this study began from a unique frame of mind when they started the decision-making process to determine if they should or should not redshirt their kindergartener. Through various methods of research including talking to teachers, comparing stories with family members and seeking advice from friends, they arrived at the same conclusion: Kindergarten redshirting is the best option for my child. The underlying assumption that all of them finally decided was that waiting one more year to begin formal schooling would be beneficial to their child in some way. Michael G.'s quote sums up the general mindset shared by many of the parents in this study:

And one of the things I thought was he's either going to be the youngest kid in his class, or the oldest kid in his class and I guess I, I mean for whatever reason, I thought it would

be better and more advantageous to him to be the oldest kid in his class, if nothing else he can be more mature than everybody else.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This dissertation was a phenomenological qualitative study that sought to capture the parental perceptions of kindergarten redshirting. The purpose of this study was to examine the decision-making process parents undergo when they are making the decision to redshirt their child and to gather parental perceptions of the effects that redshirting has had on their child. This chapter will summarize the themes that emerged from the parental interviews that dominated the decision-making process as well as provide a glimpse into how parents perceive the outcomes of their decision. Recommendations for further study will also be addressed in this chapter.

#### **The Research Questions**

The decision to kindergarten redshirt a child is a complicated and time-consuming endeavor. Parents in this study considered many factors when deciding to redshirt their children. Though their first reasons cited in the interviews seemed to be directly related to their child or to their personal beliefs, a closer look at the data reveals that all of the parents in this study operated from the belief that being older in school would be more advantageous for their child than being among the youngest in his or her grade. Each of the parents were very well aware of the fact that the close proximity of their child's birth date to the school cut-off date for kindergarten allowed them the opportunity to decide whether their child would be among the oldest or youngest among their peers. The overwhelming theme shared by all of the parents in the study was that being older provided more advantages for their child.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

- 1) What is the decision-making process that parents utilize when deciding if their child should be kindergarten redshirted or not?

- 2) What do parents perceive as the academic, emotional or social outcomes from kindergarten redshirting their children?
- 3) What common factors do parents consider when they are trying to decide about the option of kindergarten redshirting their child?

### **The Decision-Making Process**

Each parent in the study spent a great deal of time pondering this decision. Some parents began the decision-making process very early in their child's life and spent years collecting data to support their decision. Two of the parents in this study never considered redshirting as an option for their child until a school official such as a teacher suggested the option to the parent. Four of the parents in the study began thinking about redshirting as an option for their child as time grew closer to the kindergarten registration date and the parent felt the child was not showing enough signs of readiness for school. The factor that separates these groups of parents is the amount of time they spent on the decision-making process. Some parents spent three to four years thinking about this decision, while some parents only spent a few weeks.

As time grew closer and closer to the first day of kindergarten, the parents who had made their decision early grew more confident as they compared their children to the other children around them. None of the parents in this category believed the decision was difficult. A large number of parents in this category were teachers and used anecdotal experiences to justify their redshirting decision. More parents in this category claimed to have made the decision close to their child's birth and gained confidence in their decision as their child grew older.

On the other hand, the parents who made the decision later in their child's lives began to grow more anxious as the deadline approached. Some of them had to decide whether or not the child should attend preschool graduation because they had not yet finalized their decision. These

parents continued to gather research and compare their child's developmental stages with children of the same age.

Though the parents spent varying amounts of time on the decision, ultimately, they arrived at the same conclusion, which was that redshirting their child would be more beneficial than sending them to kindergarten. Many of the parents in the study finally settled on the reasoning that while there may be risks if the child is younger than average, there seem to be no risks if the child was older than average for their grade level. Many of the parents stated that they had never talked to any parent who redshirted their child and regretted the decision, while they had found that some parents regretted their decision to send their relatively young child to kindergarten. For parents struggling with the decision, they felt that redshirting was the safer, less risky path.

All the parents in this study claimed that there is very little help for parents struggling to make this decision. Many of the parents in this study relied on anecdotal research by talking to friends and family members about the decision. The teachers in the study used their classroom experiences to analyze how well younger and older children progressed in their classroom. Their individual research played a part in supporting their decision. Some of the parents had personal experiences in their own lives from which to draw. There seems to be a lack of information for parents about kindergarten redshirting so parents are forced to rely on friends, relatives and teachers to guide them through the process. The research gleaned from these people relies heavily on anecdotes and personal opinions about child development.

It is interesting that all the parents made comments that could be tied to the research that has been conducted on kindergarten children, yet none of the parents claimed to have read what had been published. The parents seemed to innately understand that the more mature their child

was in kindergarten, the better they would adjust, which aligns to the findings of Raver (2002) and Alexander and Entwisle (1988). Raver (2002) posited that success in kindergarten could have an impact on the long-term academic success of children. Alexander and Entwisle's (1988) research on maturity ratings and their impact on the success of kindergarten transition closely mirrors what parents in this study said about their reasons for redshirting their child. Though many of the parents were teachers, none of them cited any of the studies that had been conducted about how maturity can affect student achievement. Instead, they relied on their own observations from the field which seem to align with the research.

The decision-making process of the parents in this study focused on their individual beliefs about child development and how their child's birth date would factor into academic and social outcomes. The primary theme that emerged was that all the parents believed that giving their child an extra year before starting kindergarten would provide the child with advantages at some point in school. By examining all the data gleaned during the interview process, it is clear that even parents whose first explanation about why they redshirted was focused on their child's developmental level at the time of kindergarten, they were aware that problems in kindergarten may lead to problems in subsequent grades. The primary reason to redshirt a child seems to be an effort by parents to prevent potential academic problems for their child as well as to provide as many advantages as possible.

### **Parental Perception of Outcomes**

The second research question refers to the parental perception of how redshirting has affected their child. Since the parents in the study had children of varying ages, it was difficult for some parents to differentiate which factor was inherent to their child's personality and which trait was directly affected by redshirting. For the parents of the youngest children in the study, it



was evident to them that a year of maturity had an impact on behaviors such as being able to sit still and pay attention to the teacher. The parents of older children emphasized that academic success could be traced back to redshirting as well as success in the area of athletic ability. But it was difficult for these parents to separate out the social ramifications. Since the decision had been made a decade ago or longer for some, it was not easy for the parents to separate out the emotional effects that kindergarten redshirting may have had on their children.

The overall perceptions of effects for their children were very positive. All but one of the parents in the study said they would redshirt their child again as well as recommend it to a friend in the same circumstance. In fact, several of the parents in the study said that they recommend kindergarten redshirting to other parents at any chance available. Since most of the parents are teachers, their recommendations impact a wide variety of parents who most likely come to them for advice on the subject of redshirting. As this study has suggested, teachers seem to be the primary educational resource that parents use for research about kindergarten redshirting.

The effects in the study were found by coding techniques. Academic effects were summarized by categorizing parental responses about whether redshirting had positively or negatively affected their child in the areas of math, reading and overall grades. Emotional effects were found by the parental perceptions of confidence level and general behavior of their child in school. Social effects were calculated by the parental perceptions of how redshirting affected their child's ability to deal with social situations and whether or not the parents considered their child a leader among peers. The social effects were more difficult for parents to ascertain because they felt that the child's personality was shaped by factors that did not pertain to the fact that they had been redshirted in kindergarten. A discussion about each type of effect follows.

## **Academic Outcomes**

The parents in this study claimed that there were overwhelmingly positive effects on the academic outcomes for their child as a result of redshirting. Math and reading ability were the two factors that reaped the highest rewards. The parents in this study operated from a maturationist view of child development, which meant that they believed that optimal learning occurs when the child is developmentally ready. They thought that older children have an advantage over younger children. One of the reasons stated by parents in this study for this advantage was that an older child could more easily conform to the expectations of kindergarten. This line of thinking very closely aligns with the research concerning maturity ratings (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988) and the ability to regulate emotions (Graziano et al., 2007). The parents seemed to understand that academics could be linked directly to how well their child handled the stress of kindergarten. Being able to separate from their parent as well as handle teacher expectations helped their child learn more in school and have higher student achievement in subsequent grades. All the parents in this study stated that their redshirted child did well in school. Of the children who had already graduated from high school, all were either college graduates or undergraduates on track to obtain a degree.

## **Emotional Outcomes**

The emotional outcomes of the children in this study were directly related to the academic and social outcomes. The parents believed that the better their child was able to handle being away from the parent as well as adjusting to the expectations of the adults in school were directly tied to their child's academic success as well as their ability to get along with other children. Again, parents felt that older children could adjust more easily the demands of kindergarten.

One emotional outcome stated by a few parents, however, came from the comments made by the child who had been redshirted. In each of these cases, the child was very well aware of the fact that he/she had been redshirted and knew that he/she could have been in the next higher grade. For the children who were in high school, the complaints relayed to their parents came from the fact they knew they would be one year closer to graduation if they had not been redshirted. One parent in particular said that her son complained many times in high school about being redshirted, but when he started college, he actually thanked his mother for redshirting him. The pressure to adjust to college was much greater than he had expected it to be and he felt that if he had been a year younger, it would have been much harder. Some of the girls in the study wanted to be in the older grades because they felt that they had more in common with older students. Though all of these complaints were reported by the parents, the parents did not seem overly concerned with them and remained steadfast that redshirting them in kindergarten was the best decision for their child.

### **Social Outcomes**

Social outcomes in this study emerged based on how the parents viewed their child's ability to relate to friends and peers. Most of the parents in this study felt that their child was a leader among his/her peers, though not all of them thought it could be attributed to redshirting. Some of the parents concluded that leadership skills were an innate trait their child possessed from birth, so redshirting would have had no effect. Other parents, however, suggested that there was a huge impact on their child's confidence level which affected their ability to successfully lead others. Again, the theme of "older is better" emerged as many parents claimed that since they were older, the younger students tended to admire and follow their children.

The negative social outcome was found with only one family. This family differed from the others because they chose to have their child attend the same kindergarten twice. The parent said that her daughter had a very hard time adjusting to her situation as she realized she was in kindergarten again while her friends had moved on to first grade. This mirrors the outcomes found by Jimerson (2001) that the emotional impacts of repeating a grade can have long-lasting effects on the self-esteem of the student. This is an important point to examine. Some parents struggling to decide if they should redshirt their child opt to put their child into kindergarten with a “wait and see” type of mentality. If the child does not adjust well, then kindergarten can be repeated. However, the work of Jimerson (2001) and the experiences of the parent in this study show that the strategy is one that does not provide the same benefits as allowing the child an additional year of preschool before kindergarten.

### **Common Factors**

The most common factor among parents deciding whether or not to redshirt their child comes from having a child with a birth date in close range of the kindergarten cut-off date. All the parents in this study were aware of the fact that if they allowed their child to begin school when they were legally able to begin, the child would be among the youngest in their respective grade. The parents in this study believed that being younger would provide a disadvantage to their child as opposed to the type of school experience their child would have if they chose to wait a year before enrolling them in kindergarten.

The theme “older is better” emerged multiple times in various contexts. Some of the parents were concerned primarily with how their child would handle the kindergarten year. But when pressed to consider other reasons, they stated that they thought that being older among their peers would buttress their child against the negative experiences in high school such as

dealing with drugs and alcohol. Many of the parents were concerned about when their child would be able to drive a car in comparison to their peers and stated that they wanted their child to be among the first as opposed to being among the last to be able to drive. The parents seemed to think it would be safer for their child to be in the driver's seat as opposed to being in the passenger seat with another teenaged driver. The age at which the child went to college was also mentioned many times and the overall thinking on the subject was that older college freshman are more successful than younger students, which is similar to the research of Bedard and Dhuey (2006).

The experiences of extended family played a part for many of the parents in this study. Simply growing up with a sibling who was young for their grade and struggling in school seemed to shape how the parents felt about relative age. Some of the parents in this study had used their own parents as resources to make the decision and some of the grandparents of the children referenced in the study had expressed regret about not keeping a relatively young child back before kindergarten. Again, the theme of "older is better" emerged from these negative experiences.

A majority (70 percent) of the parents in this study was or had been a teacher at some point in their career. Several of the elementary teachers claimed to be able to spot a child who was young for grade very early in the year, even in the upper elementary grades. One high school teacher said that he dealt with very young freshmen who had more difficulty adjusting to high school than the older students. These experiences mirror the research on how maturity ratings (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988) and emotional adjustment (Raver, 2002) impact a child's academic success.

None of the parents in the study redshirted their child primarily to give them an advantage in sports. However, many of the parents knew that their child may have an advantage in sports because they would be among the oldest of their same-grade peers. The sports advantage idea occurred more often to parents whose children were already showing some type of interest in sports and with those parents who thought their sons may one day play football. The advantage gained by waiting a year was perceived by parents to be an advantage in height and physical maturity. For parents of girls, size did not seem to be an issue. Of the twenty children who were in the study, fifteen were either playing in a sport at the time of the interview or had played in high school. Having a child participate in sports was a common factor among the parents in this study.

There was a common belief that boys needed more time to mature. Thirteen of the twenty children referenced in the study were boys. Many of the parents made statements that boys are always developmentally slower than girls, whether they had redshirted a boy or a girl. Several of the teachers in the study also stated that while boys who were young for their grade had difficulty in school, the same issues were not present for girls. Again, none of the parents could cite research about where they came to acquire the belief that boys lagged behind girls in school readiness, but it seemed to be a common belief among the parents in this study.

The common factors that arose from this study include the belief that an older child in school has more advantages in many ways including academic, social, emotional and physical outcomes. Older children adjust better to the transitions to kindergarten, high school and college as well as withstand negative peer pressure more effectively. There is a belief that redshirting provides an advantage in some sports such as football and many parents in this study thought that boys especially benefited from an extra year of growth before beginning kindergarten.

## **Recommendations**

### **Supporting Parents**

The research available to parents on kindergarten redshirting is sparse. The parents who redshirt their child are making the decision based on anecdotes and their intuition about child development. The teachers in the study relied on observations of individual children in their classrooms rather than citing actual research. However, the decision to kindergarten redshirt was not made lightly. The parents in this study have shown that a great deal of time and effort is put into gathering information from teachers, friends and other parents in order to make the best decision regarding their child.

For many parents, kindergarten redshirting requires a significant financial impact for parents who either have to pay for an additional year of daycare or wait an additional year before returning to full-time employment. One way to avoid the financial impact is to enroll a child into kindergarten knowing the child could repeat the grade. This option may not be best for the child because of the negative self-esteem issues of knowing their friends have moved on to first grade without them. It is vital that parents have access to all the research that has been published about the ramifications of retention as well as the research on relative age effects. More research written in language that is easily understood by laymen must be published so that parents can have better information on which to base their decision.

Additional research should be conducted that compares the views of child development between parents who redshirted their child and parents who opted to have their child start kindergarten based on the recommended cut-off dates. A direct comparison between parents who think “older is better” and parents who think “younger is better” would yield important information about why parents make their differing decisions. Helping parents work through

their own beliefs would also help them navigate this decision-making process for their own child. In this study, every parent believed in the maturationist view of child development that a child learns with more success when they are developmentally ready to learn.

### **Supporting Redshirted Children**

Another area that should be researched is the child's view about kindergarten redshirting. While there do not seem to be the same negative effects for the child as grade retention, this study uncovered the fact that some children struggle with the fact that they were redshirted. Understanding how the child feels about redshirting could help parents frame this decision for their child to minimize negative effects. Little is known about how kindergarten redshirting affects a child's long term academic and emotional outcomes compared to children who were not redshirted. This study has shown that some children experience negative effects of redshirting at least from a parental perspective. It is difficult to determine how the child truly feels about their parent's decision without interviewing children to gain their unique perspective.

This study has shown that some children are very aware of the fact that they were redshirted, while other children do not seem to make the connection. Though this study was small in scope, how the parent answered questions from their child about redshirting seemed to help the child frame the decision. Some parents were emphatic about the long term success of redshirting and were not hesitant about sharing those views with their child. It seems that the more confident the parent is about their decision to redshirt, the more positive the child also views the decision. It is important for parents to frame the decision in a positive light when their children ask about why they were redshirted.



## **Policies for Educators**

It is clear from this study that most parents who redshirt their children make the decision with little or no expert advice. However, based on the parental assessment of the outcomes for their child, the parents were correct in the assumption that kindergarten redshirting would provide advantages for their child.

School officials should not stand in the way of parents who have the resources to redshirt their child and feel confident about their decision. However, schools should be on hand to help those parents who are not confident about their decision or who need additional research in their decision-making process. Teachers, especially kindergarten teachers, play an important role for undecided parents. This study has shown by the lack of peer-reviewed research cited by any of the parents that even teachers rely on anecdotal data and personal beliefs about child development. Educators need to have more training about how to help parents make this decision as well as more access to the research that has already been conducted in this area.

It is important to note that each parent who volunteered to participate in this study did so because they were confident about sharing their story. The sample is not representative of the population. These parents were highly educated with high incomes for their location. The majority of them began the decision-making process very early in their child's life, which means the parents understood that kindergarten redshirting was an option. There may be many more parents who could afford to redshirt their child and share the same beliefs about child development, but do not know that kindergarten redshirting is an option to consider. Schools should inform parents about this possibility with enough time so that parents can gather their own information. A kindergarten readiness screening during the spring semester before

kindergarten that informed parents about the possibility of redshirting would allow parents the time to analyze the situation and determine the best course of action for their child.

However, based on the parental views of long term effects found in this study, two recommendations could be made by schools to parents who want to redshirt their child. Those two recommendations are as follows:

- 1) The child should attend at least a half-time preschool during the redshirt year.
- 2) The child should not be put into kindergarten twice in the same school.

In this study, every child attended either a preschool or educational childcare during the redshirt year. Every child was learning valuable pre-reading and math skills while they also gained social and emotional maturity. The child who attended kindergarten twice with the same teacher in the same school had the least number of positive effects from kindergarten redshirting and instead internalized the repeat year as a negative experience. Parents who adopt a “wait and see” approach often allow their children to begin kindergarten thinking the child can repeat the grade if problems arise. This study as well as others (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Jimerson, 2001) provide evidence that the negative effects of repeating a grade can persist for years.

School readiness impacts academic achievement (Furlong & Quirk, 2011). Schools should screen children to determine whether or not they are developmentally ready in relation to the peers in their cohort. Recommendations should be based not only on individual children but also in relation to the actual children with whom they will attend school. Parents must be informed with enough time before their child starts kindergarten so that they can review and weigh their options. The process should begin no later than four months before the first day of kindergarten.

However, the readiness assessments should examine more than just how many letters a child can name or how high they can count. Research has shown that the emotional maturity of children in kindergarten can have lasting effects on success (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Pagani & Allard, 2011; Raver, 2002). New readiness assessments must be developed that can measure the emotional and maturational aspects that children must possess in order to reach their full potential.

The age of the child at school entry has been shown to determine long term academic success (Datar, 2006; Oshima & Domaleski, 2006; Yesil-Dagli, 2006). State and federal education organizations should invest in pre-kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs that allow for relatively young children to gain academic and emotional maturity before comparing them to a standard of achievement they may not be ready to face. These federal and state programs could allow children from impoverished or lower middle class homes to receive the same benefit as redshirted children. This study yields evidence that investing in an additional year of preschool can provide long term advantages for children and make them more likely to attend and graduate college. The additional year of preschool was not viewed by children as a negative experience the way that repeating a grade has shown (Jimerson, 2001).

Educators must also begin to examine the effects of kindergarten on its youngest students. The teachers in this study claimed that they could identify the youngest child in a class based on specific characteristics. These characteristics may also lower long term student achievement for these children. Schools must ensure that every child is allowed to mature at their own pace and that learning is not dependent on a pre-determined baseline of maturity ratings but rather it should be individualized for each student. A special effort should be made to

ensure that children from poverty-stricken homes who are also among the youngest in their cohort are not adversely affected by relative age effects.

### **Conclusions**

The parents in this study provided a glimpse into the decision-making process for parents who decide to redshirt their kindergartener. The experiences of each parent are unique as well as the process they used to arrive at their decision. However, each of them operated from the maturationist viewpoint of child development that most closely resembles Piaget's work (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). This viewpoint is that children learn best when they are developmentally ready.

The parents in this study also believed that "older is better" in all aspects of schooling. Being among the older children in a grade provides a child with more maturity, which in turn helps the student adjust not only to kindergarten, but also to subsequent transitions such as high school and college entry. They also reasoned that being older among their peers allowed their children to become leaders and provided them with better coping strategies for dealing with peer pressure that they experienced or would experience as teenagers.

The parents in this study had a very clear understanding that they had the power to decide whether their child would be among the oldest or among the youngest for their child's grade and that the decision would affect them throughout their academic careers. Once they determined that their beliefs were focused on the idea that older children do better in school than younger children, then the decision was not difficult. For these parents, redshirting their child was something they could do to ensure the long term success of their child.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Participant Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Kelli Dougan and I am working to complete my dissertation at the University of Arkansas. My research study is about kindergarten redshirting. Kindergarten redshirting is the phenomenon when parents voluntarily choose to keep their child out of kindergarten for an additional year. In most cases, these children have birthdays just before the kindergarten cut-off date.

I would like to interview parents and guardians of who chose to redshirt their child before kindergarten. The interviews will take no more than 30 minutes of your time and will be conducted at a place of your choosing. There is no risk to you and you may stop participating in the interview at any time. All interviews will be recorded digitally and kept in a secure location. No identifying information about you or your child will be connected to your interview responses or used in any publication resulting from this research. If you have any questions, please call me, Kelli Dougan. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. John Pijanowski. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's IRB Coordinator, at (479) 575-2208 or by e-mail at [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

Your experiences as a parent who made the decision to redshirt your child is of great value to other parents struggling to decide for their own child. The insights you can provide about your experience will help other parents decide what is best for their children. I appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions. Please call or e-mail me if you have any questions or concerns about this study.

Sincerely,

Kelli Dougan  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Arkansas



## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol**

1. What is your name?
2. What is the gender of your child?
3. What is your child's current grade in school?
4. What is your child's birth order in your family?
5. Where did your child spend most of the weekday during the year before they went to kindergarten?
6. Thinking back to when you were deciding about redshirting your child, what were the main reasons you considered it?
  - a. Financial reasons?
  - b. Maturity issues?
  - c. Future concerns such as age at graduation?
  - d. Sports ability?
  - e. Lack of academic preparedness?
  - f. Peer conflicts?
7. Who did you discuss this decision with?
  - a. Friends?
  - b. Family?
  - c. Preschool teacher?
  - d. Elementary teacher?
  - e. Pediatrician?
  - f. Online communities such as Babycenter.com?
  - g. Other education experts such as college professors?
8. Was it a difficult decision to make?
9. Did you find a lot of research about redshirting in books or on the internet?
10. Once you had made your decision, how did your friends and family react?
11. How did your child's kindergarten teacher react when they found out your child had been redshirted?
12. Do you feel that redshirting has positively or negatively affected your child in the following areas?
  - a. Reading?
  - b. Math?
  - c. Grades?
  - d. Dealing with friends?
  - e. Feeling confident about themselves?
  - f. Behavior in school?
  - g. Peer conflicts such as bullying?
  - h. Sports?
  - i. Other activities?
13. Do you feel your child is a leader among peers?

14. Do you feel that kindergarten redshirting gives your child more advantages than other children?
15. Would you make the same decision again?
16. Would you make the same decision if your child was the opposite gender?
17. Would you recommend redshirting to a friend in the same situation?
18. What sports is your child involved in right now?
19. What other extra-curricular activities is your child involved in now?
20. Has your child ever qualified for special services in school?
  - a. GT
  - b. Special Education
  - c. 504
  - d. Speech
  - e. Mental Health Services
  - f. Physical Therapy
  - g. Occupational Therapy
  - h. Social Services
21. Now I would like some information about you. Were you or anyone in your immediate family redshirted as a child?
22. What is your highest level of education?
23. What is your marital status?
24. Which one of these describes your household income before taxes?
  - a. \$0 to \$20,000
  - b. \$20,000 to \$40,000
  - c. \$40,000 to \$80,000
  - d. \$80,000 to \$120,000
  - e. Above \$120,000
25. How old were you when your first child was born?
26. What is your race or ethnicity?
27. Do you have any additional information you'd like to add?

## Appendix C: Parent Demographics

Gender of parent	
Male	3
Female	17

Current Household Income Level	
\$40,000 to \$80,000	1
\$80,000 to \$120,000	9
Over \$120,000	10

Parent Education Level	
Some college	3
Bachelors Degree	8
Masters Degree	9

## Appendix D: Child Demographics

Gender of Children	
Boys	13
Girls	7

Birth Order (including half-siblings)	
Oldest	3
Middle	3
Youngest	11
Twins	2
Only	1

Child's Current Grade in School	
Pre-school	1
Elementary (K-6)	6
Secondary (7-12)	9
College	1
College Graduate	3

## Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter

October 29, 2013

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Kelli Dougan  
John Pijanowski

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 13-10-181

Protocol Title: *The Effects of Kindergarten Redshirting from a Parental Perspective*

Review Type: ☐ EXEMPT ☒ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 10/28/2013 Expiration Date: 10/27/2014

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Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 20 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210

Administration Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

## Appendix E: Co-authorship Letter



Peabody Hall ♦ Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701 ♦ Department of Curriculum and Instruction

March 8, 2014

Re: Published work in Kelli Dougan's dissertation

The majority of the work in the article cited below was completed independently by Kelli Dougan as she was working under my supervision to complete chapter 2 of her dissertation.

Dougan, K. & Pijanowski, J.C. (2011). The effects of academic redshirting and relative age on student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*. 6(2).

Sincerely,

John C. Pijanowski  
Professor of Educational Leadership